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ABSTRACT

Half of this paper is the text of a lecture based on the author's philosophy of career education and stimulated program development, which he indicates was formulated during years of rapid change in our high schools. From his experiences as principal and instructional leader he draws conclusions regarding (1) common learnings which remain the heart of the curriculum (communication skills, quantitative skills, and the American heritage, history, and culture), (2) the need for career awareness programs to be a part of the curriculum from K-12, and (3) the need for community-advisory councils established to assist in planning and implementing programs in career awareness, consumer awareness, and vocational entry-work skill programs. The second half of this paper consists of the author's answers to five questions from the audience of educational research and development personnel. (HD)

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Occasional Paper No. 22

THE CHANGING SECONDARY EDUCATION SCENE: IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

by

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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PREFACE

The Center for Vocational Education is indebted to Charles M. Fallstrom for his lecture entitled "The Changing Secondary Education Scene: Implications for Vocational Education Research and Development." In his speech, he presented his views of career awareness and career preparation in secondary schools today. He said that the public secondary school is undergoing considerable change as a result of societal impact and the "economic squeeze." He maintained that the last decade has reflected significant attention being given to vocational and career education.

Mr. Fallstrom is currently the principal of Issaquah High School, Issaquah, Washington. An experienced secondary school administrator, he is also serving as president of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which has a membership of approximately 60,000 in the United States, Canada, and overseas schools. Mr. Fallstrom has served as a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Secondary School Principals for five years.

In addition, Mr. Fallstrom served eleven years on the Accrediting Committee, Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Institutions. He has served on vocational education advisory committees for the Washington State Department of Education from 1970 to 1973, and on the Washington State University Vocational Education Curriculum Specialist Project from 1974 to 1976. He is also a member of Phi Delta Kappa.

Mr. Fallstrom has written numerous articles dealing with the area of secondary schools and principals. He is also a recipient of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Citational Plaque for leadership to secondary school administrators.

On behalf of The Center and The Ohio State University, I take pleasure in presenting Charles Fallstrom's lecture, "The Changing Secondary Education Scene: Implications for Vocational Education Research and Development."

Robert E. Taylor
Director
The Center for Vocational Education

THE CHANGING SECONDARY EDUCATION SCENE: IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Those of us who have had the privilege of occupying the principal's chair over the past fifteen years have become somewhat cautious of the thrust for immediate change placed upon the high school program by today's educational theorists. The practitioner has withstood the impact of the Conant Report, Sputnik, new math, linguistic English programs, P.S.S.C. physics, chem-study, career awareness projects, teaching machines, scheduling systems, individualized study, continuous progress, H.E.W. regulations, and many more new ideas and theories for improving the level of achievement of today's youth. Add to these thrusts the increased percentage of youth between the ages of twelve-eighteen attending secondary schools today, a gain from approximately 75 percent in the 1950's to 95 percent in 1975. The impact has been one of change, but the results have not indicated that the effort has improved the product. The Ford Foundation reports that after millions of dollars had been spent on projects to improve the education of youth, the results were not much to brag about. In fact, they were somewhat discouraging. E.T.S. contends that the college board scores have dropped over the past ten years. Today, the principal is feeling the wind flowing down from the Basic Education Hills, fanned by legislative wings. One does not have to use a calculator to understand why the practitioner is a courteous person on today's education scene, and very cautious.

The impact of the need to provide for the educational needs of the 95 percent of the fourteen-eighteen year-olds now attending secondary schools has resulted in a more comprehensive program in most high schools today. Pre-vocational, vocational, and career awareness programs are more prevalent in today's curriculum.

Sidney Marland, while serving as Commissioner of Education, emphasized the importance of career and vocational education in the public schools in a speech to the N.A.S.S.P. Convention in Houston, Texas, in 1971. State departments of public instruction reacted to the U.S.O.E.'s position by stimulating career education, career awareness programs in the school systems by in-service programs, seed money, and statewide vocational education committees. The results were encouraging and high schools slowly began changing to more comprehensive programs. In some districts like Dallas, Texas, Milwaukee and Oregon, large vocational centers were built that provided for clusters of vocational skills to be taught, using modern equipment and staffed by vocational technicians with field experience. The surrounding schools provided the students on a part-day arrangement. Work experience, on-the-job training, and cooperative work programs are rapidly becoming part of the program in the twelfth-year of high school.

It was during these years of rapid change in our high schools that I formulated a philosophy of career education and stimulated program development. From my experiences as a principal and instructional leader, I have drawn the following conclusions.

Common Learnings remain the heart of the curriculum. We all recognized that only with some web of mutual understanding and common values can a society function. Without these, society ceases to exist as a society. These common learnings are important to all high school students, regardless of his/her career goals. They are:

1. **Communication skills:** the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and interpret.

2. **Quantitative skills:** the ability to use quantitative relationships to solve problems and to select correct operations using decimals and percentages.

3. **The American heritage, history, and culture:** an understanding of the history, government, and culture of this nation and of interrelationships with the peoples and resources of the planet.

In addition, students should have the opportunity to explore on a consistent basis natural science, practical arts, fine arts, body-functions, physical education, career awareness, and career preparation. There also should be planned opportunities for secondary students to gain experience in the world of work and to participate in the adult society as a full partner. It is in the areas of career awareness and career preparation that I wish to address my remarks and personal conclusions as a practicing secondary school principal.

Career Awareness Programs should be a part of the curriculum from K-12. In today's world, youth get little opportunity to explore the world of work. They seldom get a chance to learn about occupations from their parents. Most homes do not contain the tools of the trades as they did in the early days of our country. Without well-planned career awareness programs in the schools that have been planned in both scope and sequence, young people grow up in almost complete ignorance of the career opportunities that are available to them. Without an understanding of the importance of academic learning as it is applied to a variety of career opportunities, the student often loses interest in achievement during his/her junior and senior school years.

Many teachers have had little, if any, experience in the world of work. They entered college after graduating from high school. Upon graduation from college, they moved directly into the teaching profession. If a sound career awareness program is to be developed in a school system, a strong in-service program must be offered by the individual school district. Colleges and universities must gear themselves as the in-service center for career awareness and career education programs. They must be prepared to send their staffs out to the school systems to aid the local schools in providing a practical and sound in-service program that includes graduate credit for the teachers completing the program. In-service programs may be the one way the colleges and universities can meet the drop in enrollment brought on by a lower birth rate. The high schools in turn must realign their curricula to provide for career awareness programs and a wide range of experiences and activities broad enough to permit students to take full advantage of career opportunities in their communities or within their range of travel, whichever is the greater.

Community Advisory Councils that include representatives from labor unions, business communities, service clubs, parents of students, students, teachers, and any other interested citizens should be established to assist in planning and implementing programs in career awareness, consumer awareness, and vocational entry-work skill programs. Without the support of the broader community, it is difficult to use the total community as a place of learning. Teachers and principals need to develop the necessary skills in community relations and organization to launch and maintain a good community-based career education program that permits visitation, cooperative work programs, and off-campus skill development programs. The colleges and universities should prepare teachers and administrators for their new role in community organizations and advisory council leadership. The skills involved in bringing about consensus in a divergent community must be included in the preparation for today's educational leader.

Pre-vocational and entry-work skill courses should be available to all. No student should be permitted to graduate from high school without a salable skill. Parents, the general public, and the students themselves view high school graduation as the key to entering into the world of work. Without a background in career awareness, entry-work skills, and the proper attitude toward work, many of today's high school graduates and dropouts waste years of their productive lives drifting about, unable to produce the skills necessary to hold a job that will support them in today's society.

The entry-work skills programs of a comprehensive high school can be integrated into the curricula in such a manner as to provide the opportunity for the student to meet the strictest college entrance requirements and also receive entry-work skills. These skills, along with the proper attitude, will open doors to the job market, enabling the student to maintain the dignity of being able to support himself/herself on a full or part-time basis, while he/she pursues a college or university degree program. The success of such a program depends a great deal on maintaining the same dignity and recognition for the entry-work skills program as that given to college preparatory programs.

Learning to work to earn requires a realistic experience to develop the proper attitudes, personal relationships, and job communication skills. A student needs guided work experience. The entry-skills programs that provide for a cooperative work program are important to the success of many young people. I can relate the successes at Issaquah High School for statistical purposes. At Issaquah High School, we found that when pre-job counseling was provided, followed by on-the-job follow-up counseling, the success rate of the entry worker was about 90 percent. Before on-the-job counseling was provided, those students identified as marginal in their personal attitudes and relationships had only a 50/50 chance of remaining on their first work experience for a full month.

It is often difficult to develop a consensus at the school board level and in the community that a teacher working full-time in the community with an average class load of twenty-five to thirty is providing students with the same degree of learning as would be provided for them in the classroom. School systems planning new entry-work salable skills programs need to develop strong community advisory committees composed of recognized leaders from the various levels of the economic and social structure that make up the community. The selection of the committees cannot be left to a volunteer process. It often takes salesmanship on the part of the curriculum leader to interest a good cross-section of the community's leadership to serve on committees, evaluate the program concepts, and to set goals and follow-up procedures that are necessary in getting a program off to a good start.

Washington State University, under the leadership of Dr. Roberta Hill, is currently working under a grant from the federal government to develop a program of studies and experiences that will lead to a degree, Vocational Education Curriculum Specialist. If this R/D program is successful, the public schools will be able to select vocational education leaders prepared to provide the type of leadership needed in developing and improving the career education programs in schools nationally.

The counseling programs in many of our high schools need to be overhauled, as does the preparation of counselors. If one of the purposes of counseling in a high school is to help each student with his/her educational planning for entry into society and the world of work, then the certification for the counseling certificate must contain more requirements and experiences in career awareness, career planning, and on-the-job guidance. Students who have a fair definition of where they are going career-wise tend to relate their studies to their goals. The result is better student performance in school, and in academic achievement and citizenship. Today's counselor must have the background and skills to communicate with business, labor, and industrial management in a meaningful manner, and in a like manner relate to the students the opportunities available to them in the community, the skills required, and the related school work required. The counselor should be available to students of the community who have dropped out of school and require career and/or on-the-job guidance. The school has a responsibility to assist and guide each young person within the school district, until he/she graduates or reaches the age of eighteen years.

In today's complicated and technical society, it is difficult for many young people to locate an entry-work job. The public school should provide as part of its vocational or career education program a skilled person whose major responsibility is to help those students who desire work experience or "just plain jobs" to locate jobs, apply for them, and provide on-the-job guidance with the aid of the

employer until the student has displayed reasonable chance for success. The jobline specialist works with the employment security agency, makes personal contacts, and sends out brochures explaining the school's career program and entry-work skills possessed by the students and graduates. The goal is to bring the students into contact with the available jobs. At this point the counselor with background information and personal acquaintance with the student takes over the guidance responsibilities for the student.

Career awareness, career education, entry-work skills, career guidance, work experience, and jobline programs are an important part of an effective secondary school program in today's society where more than 95 percent of the fourteen to eighteen-year-olds must turn for their basic education. To many young people, these programs are as basic to their success in today's society as are the 3 R's. There are many ways to reach the goal of preparing a student for successful survival in today's society. I believe the public secondary schools of America are rising to the challenge of alternate paths to success.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Can we provide every student with a salable skill, given a number of barriers which cause difficulty in this area?

Yes. One must first define the term "salable skill." The technical and industrial people have a definition, the business education another, as do many other skill preparation programs. Our program uses a broad definition. A "salable skill" refers to the ability to hold a job that will provide a survival subsistance. The skills may be as simple as knowing how to type forty-five words per minute, operate a cash register, short-order cooking, waiting tables, operating a tractor, using power tools, etc. The student may gain his/her salable experience at home, on a part-time job in the community, or in a high school vocational program. The important thing is for the student to possess a skill that will permit him/her to earn money. When the student demonstrates the ability to hold a job, he/she has the opportunity to earn and learn and move about in the job market as he/she develops more skills. Let me give you a few examples. One student may follow a business education program, graduate with the ability to take shorthand, keep records, operate business machines, etc. Another may have learned to be a short-order cook in a fast foods restaurant, while a third may have learned to repair small motors in vocational agriculture class.

I have followed students who have completed a salable skill, worked part-time using the skill while completing a strong college preparatory program that permitted them to enter Harvard, Yale, and M.I.T. Of course, these were exceptional young people. They did not object to the salable skill requirement.

I have one final example that has been impressed in my mind for several years. A young man in my high school had a difficult struggle with the academic requirements. I don't know of a faculty member that encouraged him to enroll in their class. In the agriculture shop program, he learned to measure and read a scale, to operate a few power tools, and to respect machinery. This young man visited school a year after graduation. He was driving a new, bright red automobile. He said, "You know, the best darn course you have in this school is agriculture. It was the only course I took that taught anything a fellow can use out in the real world. I got a job operating a big drill press because I could measure carefully and knew how to use a drill press. Take a good look at my car. I am earning $6.15 an hour. I want you to know all of us dumb kids are not unsuccessful." This young man is a good example of why high schools need comprehensive programs. His statements made me reexamine my philosophy of education. He had developed a simple salable skill; to him it was one of his most valuable assets.

The message is that every youngster should develop a skill that will permit him/her to earn money and thus be able to partially or fully support himself/herself. It is preferable that a student has a chance to put the skill to practice while still under the guidance of the school.

Too often, we find schools emphasizing highly technical skills in their vocational and technical programs with the requirements for entering the program set high enough to discourage or eliminate a great number of young people. The results are that there is little left in the school's curriculum for

a number of youngsters who are not able, interested, or motivated to succeed in general academic studies. In developing salable skills programs, one must be careful not to place too much emphasis upon the highly technical skills programs. There are many ways people earn a living—some do it with their mouth.

Question: How do secondary schools prepare for technological and value changes in society and their impact on education?

Into our fraternity of education, we must bring psychologists, sociologists, economists, and all the related scientists. Each has an important contribution to give in helping us prepare young people for "the Future Shock." Schools are now exploring and must continue to explore ways to prepare students for the rapid technological changes that are at this moment altering our plans, life styles, and our environment. Since the schools are formed by society, and to a great extent reflect society, I might answer your questions by stating again that the schools look to the fraternity of education for research and direction. I assume that this is one of the reasons we are all gathered here.

Perhaps the best way to summarize the first portion of your question is to say that schools are being called upon for a more comprehensive education through complimentary arrangements and linkages with the community. There is a shift of emphasis away from the comprehensive school toward a comprehensive education. The experts are telling us that the confines of one building are no longer enough to contain all of the valuable educational experiences necessary for today's youth. A greater diversity in formal education is needed—a program that reflects the actual diversity of learning situations and the variety of experiences that living in today's world demands. I keep asking myself, "What are the best situations in which learning can take place?" Not, "How can we fit such learnings into the school?" I suppose that I reflect the position of N.A.S.S.P. on "Action Learning" (a little advertising, if permitted). N.A.S.S.P. has developed a tape and filmstrip on "Action Learning." It is available for a small fee.

The second portion of your question concerns values education. Here again, I am not an expert. Today's youth, like no other generation, have to face the pressures of making good decisions about how to live their lives. By looking at your hairline, you will agree with me, I am sure, that most of our cherished values deserve to be cherished, but their articulation and application in today's life seem alien to many students who acquire informal but powerful collateral education from television, other forms of media, their peers, and those they associate with in their communities.

We can generally get a consensus when we state that youth should practice high moral and ethical values. I had the opportunity to participate in the U.S.O.E. and N.A.S.S.P. Bicentennial Conference on American Secondary Education, "New Dimensions for Education." In a section on values education, several interesting discussions developed when someone brought up the question, "whose values?" The conferees did agree that schools must establish standards by which students can judge themselves and society. There was also consensus that schools must teach youngsters process through which they can set standards and make moral decisions for themselves.

There was agreement on the need for values education in the schools. A major conflict surfaced with the word "implementation." One very positive member made it clear that you can count on conflict with a program on values education. He cited the West Virginia textbook dispute—differing sets of school/community values—resulted in conflict.

N.A.S.S.P. takes a position in a recent publication to principals, "This We Believe," for a program of values education in the secondary schools.

A simple answer to your question may have been simply, "schools are changing to meet the new demands placed upon them by society."

Question: How did you orient academic area teaching staff to gear their orientation to career counseling?

The Center for Vocational Education provided a step-by-step process for initiating a program in career guidance in the pilot schools. They also sent an advanced crew to provide principals and team leaders with a basic understanding of the material. Two specialists were also added to the State Department of Education staff to stimulate and follow up on the progress in each pilot school.

Adult advisory and student committees were formed. They included counselors, teachers, parents, and students who were interested in the career program. Following The Center's step-by-step process for initiating a program, we were able to develop interest in career awareness. A few teachers developed units of work in their classrooms.

A program was worked out with a local college that permitted teachers to gain graduate credit for their work in developing units of study for their classes in English, history, math, and science. Graduate credit was a real stimulator in gaining teacher participation in the program.

Students later developed a career fair. The fair involved the whole school. I can honestly state that The Center for Vocational Education has earned its reputation by the workable programs it has developed and proven in the field. Without their help it would have been difficult.

Question: How did you stimulate the school counselors to gear their orientation to career counseling?

Two of the counselors were involved from the beginning of the project. They had been trained as vocational counselors. The remaining four counselors were involved directly in the planning at the school level. The development of the pilot program in career guidance provides many in-service sessions of the "what and how to do" variety. Participation breeds interest and interest stimulates action. The administration also had previously set vocational certification as part of the job description for the future.

Because of the levy loss, the school had been forced to reduce its counseling force from six to two. The two remaining on the staff were certified as vocational and career counselors.

Perhaps the interest of the administration plays a part in the stimulation of counselors. In today's schools, evaluation is an important stimulator. By setting goals together, counselors and principals can use evaluations as a tool to bring about measurable results and changes.

I might add, that in my opinion, the colleges and universities that prepare counselors for the schools have a responsibility to include requirements in vocational and career counseling at both graduate and undergraduate levels. Today's job market may well require counselors to be prepared in these areas.

Question: Is there a greater problem today than in the past with students leaving schools with a poor grasp of the basic skills?

I do not know the problem in the large urban schools. I think that there is a lot of fear built up by the media. It is hard to compare today's problem with the past. Not too many years ago, there were under 75 percent of the eligible students attending high schools. The dropouts were able to be absorbed into the labor market. Today, about 95 percent of the eligible 14 to 18-year-olds are in high schools. The job market today is more difficult in that it requires more technical skills than in the past. It does not absorb the unskilled teenager.

Television provides a non-reading source of information. It has been estimated that a student watches approximately 15,000 hours of television before he/she graduates from high school. If this is true, many students substitute TV watching for book reading. Therefore, one can reason that a great many of today's youth practice watching and listening more than they do reading and comprehending.

I would like to say from my experiences at the secondary level, that between 15 and 20 percent of the students in a given high school have difficulty mastering grammer, spelling, sentence structure, and math. In the past, these youngsters dropped out of school at an early age. Today, they become part of the statistical record.

I would summarize with this statement: There are more young people succeeding in our secondary schools today than ever before in our history. Many of our high schools are offering college courses for credit in the high schools. These same schools are also offering remedial courses for some students.

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